

May 24, 2019

TORONTO FACT SHEET: parks and recreation

Bill 108 amends 13 different pieces of legislation, including the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act. The Province has stated that the objective of Bill 108 is to increase housing supply in Ontario. However, the proposed changes to the legislation will impact the municipalities' ability to secure parkland, and restructures the funding to build community facilities like community recreation centres, libraries and child care centres. Bill 108 fundamentally affects municipalities ability to plan for liveable communities.

Some of the major changes proposed in Bill 108 relate to the planning and financial tools that the City uses to provide parks and recreation through development approvals. The City uses these tools to achieve new public parks, funding to buy new parks and to pay for recreational facilities like new community centres, basketball courts and playgrounds. Bill 108 proposes that municipalities will have to make a choice to either secure parkland (at lower rates than today), or other community infrastructure that people need.

Today, the City uses a range of tools to deliver new parks and community recreation.

- The City of Toronto assesses how many new people will be living in the city in the future, and plans for new and revitalized parks and recreation facilities needed to support Toronto's current and future population.
- The Province currently provides municipalities with a range of planning and financial tools to require new development to contribute towards their share of new parks and recreation facilities as part of development approvals. These tools include development charges, securing parkland dedications at rates established by the municipality and local community improvements to address added pressures from development. The current approach is that "growth pays for growth".

The City has been effective in using the current tools to deliver new and improved parks and recreational facilities across Toronto to support growth.

- Council has approved 106 new or expanded parks, and the construction or revitalization of 17 community recreation centres, 5 pools, 4 arenas and over 200 playgrounds.
- From 2009 to 2018, the City secured 17 hectares of new parkland through parkland dedications and purchased 15 hectares of land for parks and recreation facilities.
- From 2009-2018, the City collected \$740 million in cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication contributions from development.
- The City has a Ten Year Capital Plan to deliver new and revitalized parks and recreation facilities. 55% of the Capital Plan is funded from Development Charges and Section 42 Parkland Reserves which are being impacted by Bill 108.
- Development Charges are a tool that assists the City in funding parks and recreation facilities that are needed to support future growth. Currently the Capital Plan includes \$700 Million in planned investment in parks and recreation facilities over the next 10 yrs. To date,

the City has received \$200 Million of the anticipated Development Charges for growth related parks and recreation construction.

- Section 42 of the *Planning Act* enables municipalities to require a percentage of parkland, or the cash-equivalent as a condition of development or redevelopment. Currently, the City has \$565 Million in its Parkland Reserve accounts of which 65% (\$369 million) of the City's reserve accounts has been allocated in the Ten-Year Capital Plan for new parks and park improvements.
- There is \$154 Million in the City's reserve funds that are earmarked for strategic parkland acquisitions. With rising land values and scarcity of vacant land, the City needs to "save up" funds to purchase land outright.
- The average land value in downtown is \$40 Million per acre. The available acquisition funding is equivalent to the cost to purchase approximately three to four acres of parkland in downtown Toronto, which is roughly equivalent to one to two regulation-sized soccer fields.
- In recent years, as land values have increased, the amount of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication collected has increased. This does not translate into more funding for parks and recreation facilities, as the City must use this money to compete in the same real estate market as developers to buy parkland and build the recreation facilities.
- The Province has not released enough details for the City to understand the financial impact of Bill 108. Based on what is in Bill 108 today, the City has assessed that funding will be restructured, which is likely to have an impact on the Ten-Year Capital Plan.

The more Toronto grows, the more parks and recreation facilities are needed.

- Toronto is growing faster than any other North American city. We are 23 years ahead of schedule in meeting the Province's targets for new housing.
- Over the past five years, City Council has approved more units than have been built. Right now, there are over 140,000 approved units that have not been constructed.
- 88% of all new developments being proposed in Toronto are in tall buildings. Over the next 15 years, it is estimated that 515,000 new residents will live in tall buildings. When people have less space of their own, parks and community centres become even more important to maintaining a high quality of life in the city.
- Parks are publicly-owned land that is set aside and programmed for the enjoyment and use by people who live, work and visit our city. Parks are community and green infrastructure that offer spaces for recreational programming, play or a place to relax outdoors and contribute to a healthy environment in the face of a changing climate.
- Municipalities need parks of all sizes to ensure the physical and mental well-being of people. Parks and associated recreational facilities like community centres and sports fields contribute to great communities for people, make housing development successful and attract investment.
- The City takes parkland dedications, where feasible, as part of development to ensure growth pays for growth and to provide new parks close to where people will live to support active living.
- When a development site is too small to provide a good park, the City works with developers to find a park site nearby. If that is not possible, the City accepts a payment in lieu of the required land that goes towards buying land for parks and constructing the park.

Bill 108 proposes to change how municipalities secure and construct new parks and recreation facilities – impacting on the ability to plan for liveable communities.

- Bill 108, as drafted, will mean that municipalities will have fewer tools to plan for liveable communities. Municipalities will not be able to require both land for parks at the same time as securing other community infrastructure to support people (such as child cares or libraries). Municipalities will now need to choose between securing parkland or securing contributions towards community infrastructure.
- Bill 108 also removes municipalities' abilities to set their own requirements for how much new parkland new developments should contribute in-step with a growing population. It would now only allow a municipality to secure 5% of a development site. This cuts what Toronto currently requires from a majority of development applications by half and will not result in good, functional park spaces.
- Under Bill 108, development charges (which are collected on a per unit basis to cover the cost of new infrastructure) will exclude parks and recreation facilities. This source of revenue currently funds 37% (\$697 million) of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division's 10-Year Capital Plan.

Example: Potential impact of Bill 108 on new park dedications

Current System



Bill 108



The image on the left shows a development that was approved under the current system. The 2.2 acre park is shown in green. The image on the right shows the amount of parkland (0.4 acres) that the City would be able to require under the proposed Bill 108.

Learn more about Bill 108 and its potential impacts on local communities by visiting www.toronto.ca/bill108